

# PART 4

## LIFELINE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

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In 1997, MTC launched a series of county transportation plans specifically focused on addressing the transportation barriers faced by low-income persons who are moving from welfare to work. Several regional strategies emerged from these plans, including improvements in public transit services, piloting cost-effective alternatives to fixed route transit and non-transit options, a comprehensive assessment of the region's transit network measured against location, time of day and frequency of service objectives, and an analysis of barriers due to the cost of transportation. The Commission supported the implementation of these strategies with the adoption of the Regional Welfare to Work Plan in June 2001. While the focus of this initial work was on the transportation concerns generated by welfare reform, the resulting strategies are relevant to the transportation needs of low-income persons generally. The Commission will pursue these strategies as follows:

### LIFT PROGRAM

The welfare to work transportation planning resulted in a number of strategies that were ready for local implementation. These included improvements to existing fixed route services and innovative transportation alternatives where fixed route solutions were not considered practical or cost-effective (i.e., demand-responsive van and taxi service, guaranteed ride home programs, etc.) In response, the Commission established the Low Income Flexible Transportation Program (LIFT) that committed \$5 million in federal discretionary funds and leveraged an additional \$5million in local social services and transportation funding through a 50/50 matching requirement. The Commission is supplementing this initial investment through the commitment of \$1 million State Transit Assistance regional discretionary funds per year and advocacy for annual federal appropriations from the Job Access and Reverse Commute program (\$3 million in FY2001/02).

### LIFELINE TRANSIT NETWORK

For this 2001 RTP, the MTC completed a *Lifeline Transportation Network Report (December 2001)* that includes a comprehensive assessment of the region's public transit system and defines a Lifeline Transit Network that identifies spatial and temporal gaps in that network affecting low-income communities. In response to the findings and recommendations included in the Lifeline report analysis, and coordination with the RTP Social Equity analysis, MTC will provide financial support to conduct community transportation plans in ten communities that have the highest concentrations of low-income persons in the region. These community transportation plans will be used to validate and modify, if necessary, the results of the Lifeline analysis at the local level, working with the transit agencies, congestion management agencies and members of the communities, and identify the most effective solutions for filling the gaps identified in the Lifeline analysis.

An increased source of transit operating funds will become available to the region beginning in FY2008/09 if Proposition 42 passes in March 2002. The State Transit Assistance fund will generate an additional \$42 million per year to the transit agencies

directly and \$11 million per year to the region's STA discretionary program. The Commission will consider this funding source to partner with the transit agencies and other local partners to implement additional transportation services identified through the Lifeline Transit Network analysis and follow-on local planning.

#### **TRANSPORTATION AFFORDABILITY**

MTC's Regional Welfare to Work Plan recommends that the Commission work with multiple stakeholders (transportation providers, social services agencies, schools, employers, and other organizations) to address barriers associated with the cost of transportation for low-income persons. This issue requires a commitment from many entities to tackle a very difficult issue, since transportation subsidies take many forms today and are sponsored by multiple funding programs, such as social services agencies, employers, and transit agencies. The Commission will initiate this effort in 2002.

In a related effort, the Commission has been asked to provide financial support to implement a free transit pass program for low-income students in the AC Transit service area. As part of the transportation affordability analysis described above, MTC will undertake a pilot program to evaluate the impact of subsidized transit passes on low-income students' attendance at school and after-school programs. This pilot will include two components: (1) implementation and evaluation of a two-year pilot program in a portion of the AC Transit service area, contingent upon matching funds from local agencies, and (2) evaluation of reduced-fare programs already adopted by other transit agencies in the Bay Area and elsewhere.